S5765-3.3

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

New York State 1992 Summary Report

Vol. I, No. 3 Fall 1993

Contents

AIDS	2
Safety Belt Use	4
Cigarette Smoking	5
Alcohol Use	6
Cholesterol Screening and Awareness	8
Hypertension Awareness	9
Physical Activity	10
Overweight and Weight Control	11
Dietary Fat	12
Fruits and Vegetables	13
Pap Smear Screening	14
Mammography Use	15
Colorectal Cancer Screening	16
Diabetes	17
Violence	18

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide funding and technical assistance to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) which was introduced in New York State in 1983 and has been conducted annually since 1985. Standardized questions developed by CDC are administered via a Random-Selection telephone survey. The 1992 BRFSS was conducted in forty-eight states plus the District of Columbia. This survey provides state-specific prevalence estimates of diseases and preventable behaviors attributable to early morbidity and mortality. These data are used to assess health-related behaviors, plan and promote health programs and support legislative decisions.

Approximately 2400 New York State residents 18 years and older completed the telephone survey in 1992. Respondents are selected randomly from all New York State residents with telephones, using a probability sampling method. We use a multistage cluster design procedure based on the Waksberg Random Digit Dialing Technique. After a household has been contacted, the respondent is randomly selected from those adults residing in the household. The survey is administered by trained interviewers using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

One limitation of the survey data is that prevalence ratios of risk factors for some sociodemographic groups may have a large sampling error due to the small size of the sample in these subgroups. Other factors that affect the validity of the data or quality of the data are the respondents' honesty, accurate recall of information or not understanding the question. *Responses such as unknown or refused are included in the calculation of the percentages but not always represented in the figures.*

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System - Summary Report is published quarterly. Issues will contain brief summaries on the risk factors included in each year's survey. Occasionally, issues will summarize special surveys, analysis of trends, and more in-depth discussion of specific risk topics. Copies may be obtained by contacting:

New York State Department of Health
BRFSS Coordinator
Bureau of Adult and Gerontological Health
Empire State Plaza, Rm. 557, Corning Tower
Albany, NY 12237

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NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

AIDS

Alison Muse, MPH
(AIDS Epidemiology)

- Overall, 96.7 percent of New Yorkers reported that they have heard of the AIDS virus.
- 58 percent were aware that drugs can lengthen the life of a person infected with the AIDS virus.
- Persons with a college or post-graduate degree were twice as likely to know of available drugs as those with less than a high school education. See Figure 1.
- 42 percent believed that they could get infected with the AIDS virus from donating blood. This misconception about HIV transmission decreased with increasing education. See Figure 2.

Figure 1: "To your knowledge, are there drugs available which can lengthen the life of a person infected with the AIDS virus?"

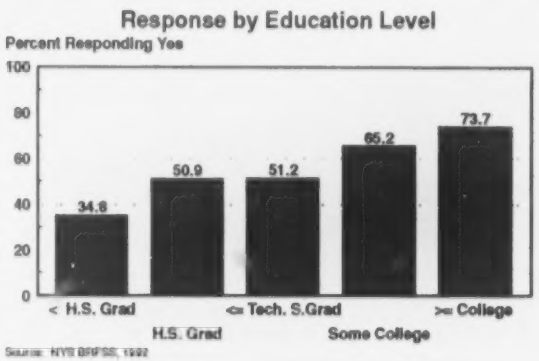
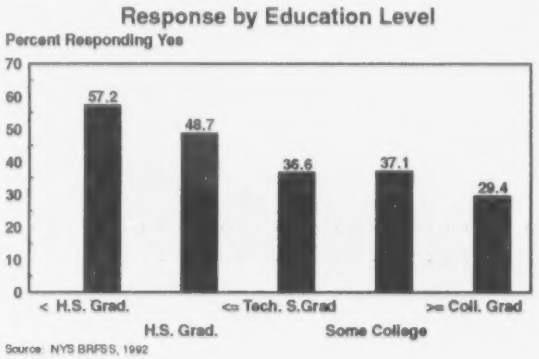


Figure 2: "Do you think you can get infected with the AIDS virus from giving blood?"



Note: AIDS related questions were asked to determine the respondents' knowledge, behaviors, and opinions related to the national health problem of AIDS and the HIV virus.

AIDS (CONTINUED)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

- Hospitals, emergency rooms or private doctors' offices were the most frequently cited sources for being tested for the AIDS virus. See Figure 3.

- Fewer than 20 percent of respondents identified public health locations (health departments or STD, AIDS or family planning clinics) as test sites; 14 percent were unaware of or did not indicate where they could go to be tested. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: "Where could you go to be tested for the AIDS virus?"

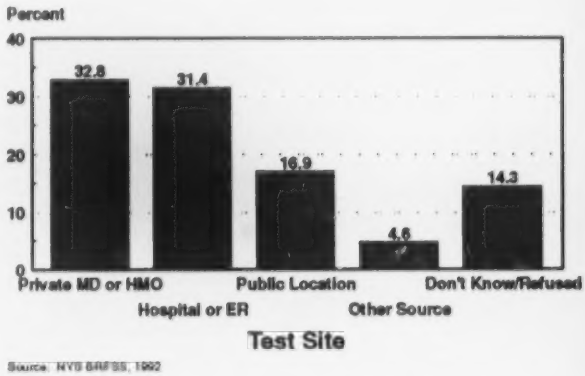
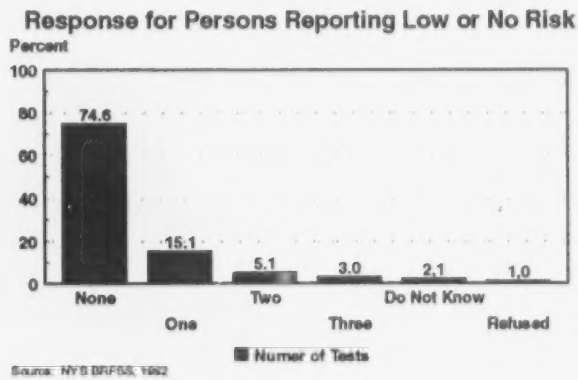


Figure 4: "How many times have you had your blood tested for the AIDS virus infection?"



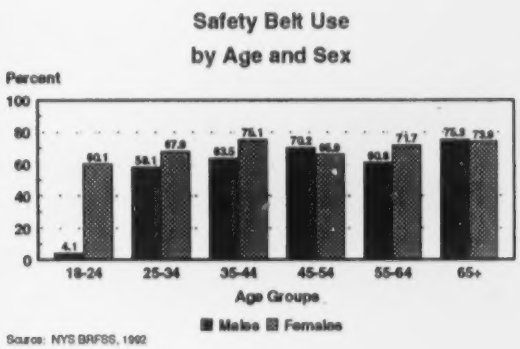
- 89 percent of respondents perceived themselves to be at low or no risk of having the AIDS virus infection. However, 23 percent of this group reported having their blood tested for the AIDS virus one or more times. See Figure 4.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Safety Belt Use

Gloria Hale-Carlsson, MPH
(Injury Control Program)

Figure 5



- 64.8 percent of New Yorkers reported they always use safety belts.
- Females reported a higher percentage of safety belt use than males with the exception of the 45-54 and 65+ age groups. See Figure 5.
- The lowest percentage of safety belt use was among males in the 18-24 year age group (4.1%). See Figure 5.

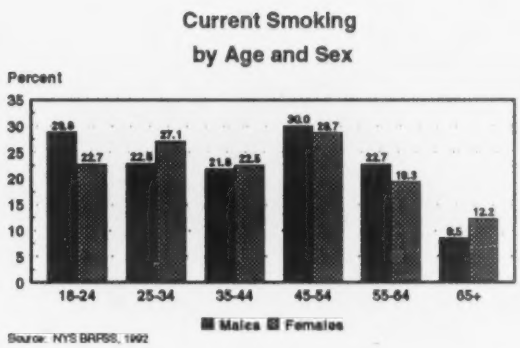
Note: **Safety belt use** is defined as always using safety belts while in an automobile.

Cigarette Smoking

Russell C. Sciandra, MA
(Bureau of Adult and Gerontological Health)

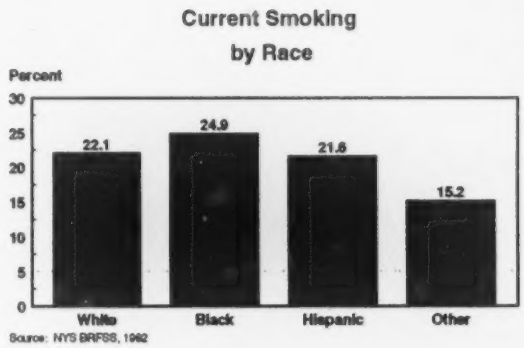
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Figure 6



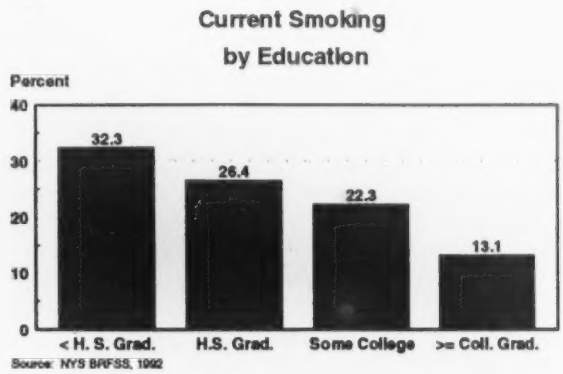
- 22.1 percent of New Yorkers reported they were current regular smokers, a decline of nearly a full percentage point from 1991.
- 53 percent of adults who ever smoked reported they became regular smokers before age 18.
- Peak smoking prevalence occurs in both sexes between ages 45 and 54. Cigarette use declines rapidly thereafter. See Figure 6.

Figure 7



- Compared to whites, cigarette use was slightly more prevalent among blacks and slightly less prevalent among Hispanics. Smoking reported by other racial/ethnic groups was significantly lower. See Figure 7.

Figure 8



- Educational status was the best predictor of cigarette use. The smoking rate among college and technical school graduates was less than one-half that of those who did not graduate from high school. See Figure 8.

Note: **Current regular smokers** are defined as those respondents who have ever smoked 100 cigarettes and smoke regularly now.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Alcohol Use

Colleen McLaughlin, MPH
(Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology)

- 53 percent of New Yorkers reported that they had consumed alcohol in the past month (Figure 9), but 54 percent of current drinkers consumed less than 10 drinks per month.
- 13 percent of all New Yorkers and 26 percent of current drinkers reported acute (binge) drinking (Figure 10). 25 percent of current drinkers aged 18-24 reported binge drinking on 3 or more occasions in the past month.
- Men were more likely than women to report patterns of drinking consistent with alcohol abuse (Figures 10 and 11), and whites reported higher levels of alcohol abuse than non-whites.

Figure 9

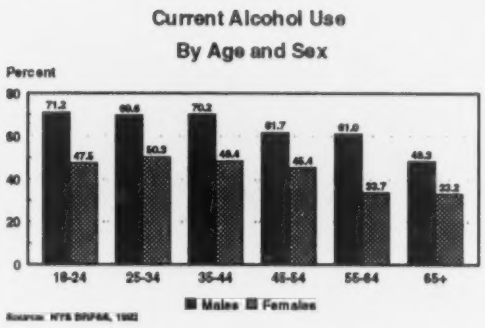


Figure 10

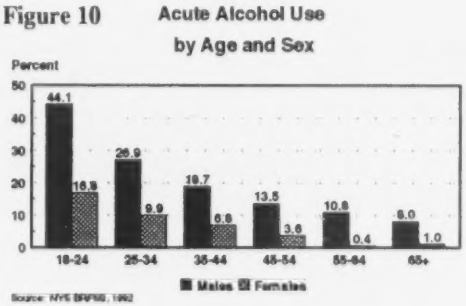
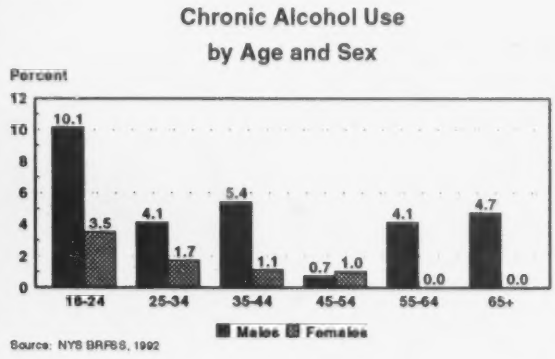


Figure 11



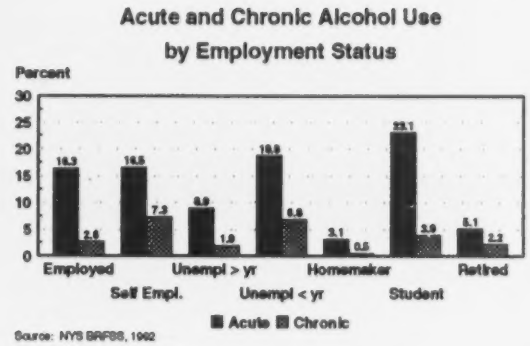
- 3 percent of all New Yorkers, and 6 percent of current drinkers, reported chronic drinking. See Figure 11.
- Alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse tended to decrease with age, although men over age 55 years reported higher chronic drinking rates than did men aged 45-55. See Figures 9, 10 and 11.

Note: Alcohol use is defined in 4 categories: current drinking, acute drinking, chronic drinking, and drinking and driving.
Current drinkers includes respondents who report having had any alcoholic beverage in the past month.
Acute (binge) drinkers includes respondents who report having 5 percent or more drinks on an occasion, 1 or more times in the past month.

Alcohol Use (CONTINUED)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Figure 12



- Respondents who were self employed or out of work for less than one year reported the highest rates of chronic drinking, whereas students reported the highest rates of binge drinking. See Figure 12.

- 3 percent of current drinkers reported drinking and driving in the past month, and over half of these individuals reported more than one episode of drinking and driving in the past month.

Chronic drinkers are those respondents who report an average of 60 or more alcoholic drinks in the past month.
The category ***Drinking and driving*** includes those who report having driven after having had perhaps too much to drink, one or more times in the past month.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Cholesterol Screening and Awareness

Thomas A. Melnik, DrPH
(Division of Nutrition)

- The prevalence of adults ever having their cholesterol checked has more than doubled in New York State since 1987, increasing from 33 percent in that year to 68 percent in 1992. Those reporting ever having their cholesterol checked in 1992 had usually done so within the past five years.

- Ever having cholesterol checked was somewhat higher in females (70.3%) compared to males (65.6%). The prevalence of ever having cholesterol checked in 1992 also increased with age for both males and females, with the exception of women over 65 years of age. See Figure 14. Ever having cholesterol checked also increased with income and educational status. See Figure 13.

- White non-Hispanics (71.3%) had a higher prevalence of ever having their cholesterol checked compared to black non-Hispanics (61.4%) and Hispanics (63.8%). See Figure 14.

Figure 15

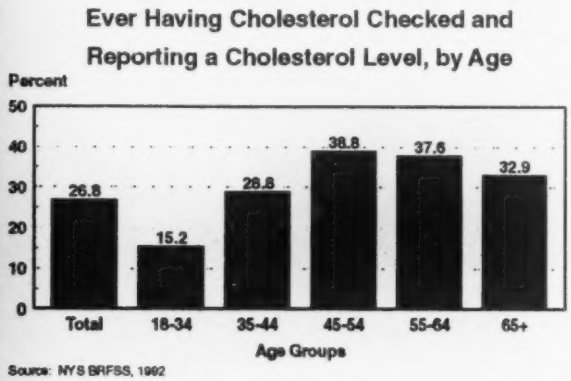


Figure 13

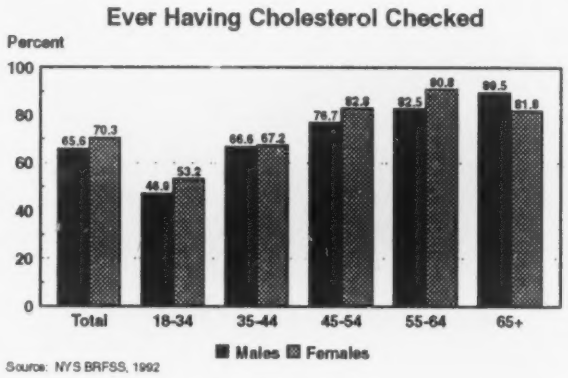
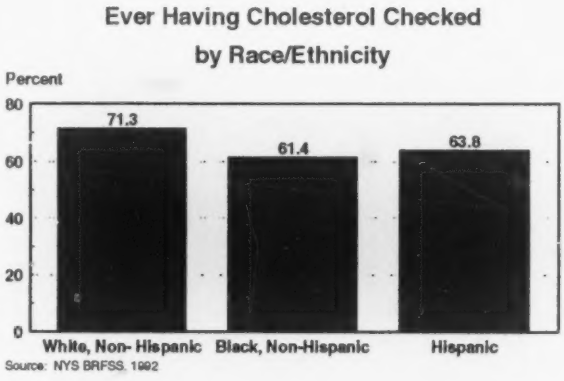


Figure 14



- Although many have had their cholesterol checked, only one in four (26.8%) were able to report their cholesterol level. Ability to report cholesterol level increased with age up to age 45-54 and then declined. See Figure 15. Males (26.7%) and females (26.8%) were equally able to report their cholesterol level.

Hypertension Awareness

Christopher Maylahn, MPH
(Bureau of Adult and Gerontological Health)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

- 95 percent of New Yorkers reported they have had their blood pressure checked in the past two years. The proportion was significantly higher among females regardless of race. See Figure 16.

Figure 16

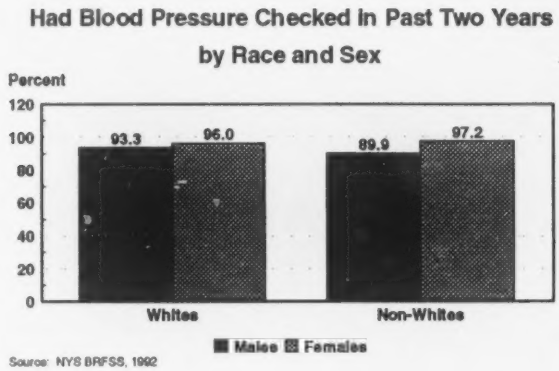
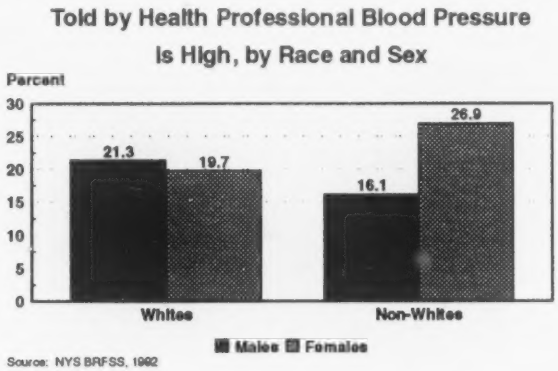
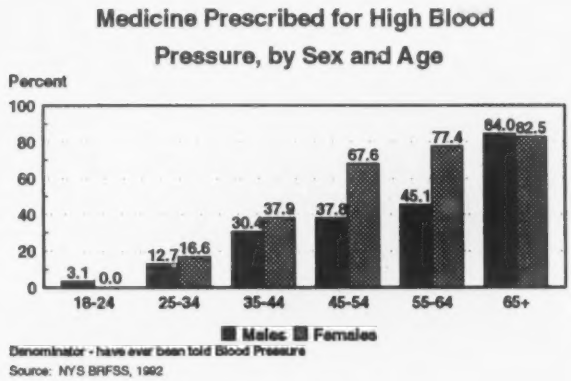


Figure 17



- One in five New Yorkers has been told by a health professional their blood pressure is high. Among females, the proportion told their blood pressure is high was significantly higher in non-whites. See figure 17.

Figure 18



- 55 percent of New Yorkers ever told they have high blood pressure were currently on antihypertensive medication. Thus the proportion was consistently lower among males except in the 65 + age group. See Figure 18.

- The proportion of New Yorkers ever told they have high blood pressure was higher among those with less education, lower income, and/or recently unemployed.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Physical Activity

Colleen Baker
(Bureau of Adult and Gerontological Health)

- 33.1 percent of New Yorkers reported that they are physically inactive.
- Females were significantly more physically inactive (36.2%) than males (29.6%).
- Physical inactivity was significantly higher among non-whites (42.9%) than whites (29.5%).
- Males age 55-64 (69.8%) and females age 65+ (74.6%) were most likely to report sedentary lifestyles. See Figure 19.

Figure 19

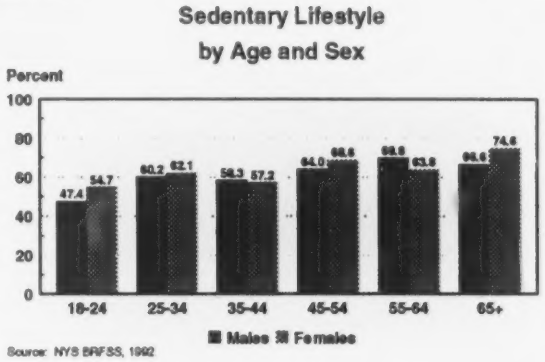


Table 1

Leisure-Time Physical Activities

	Percent
Walking	41.3
Aerobics Class	8.7
Bicycling	5.5
Running	5.3
Yard Work	5.3
Jogging	2.5
Calisthenics	2.0
Swimming	2.0
Home Exercise	1.8
Tennis	1.2
All Others	24.0

- The primary activity reported by persons who participate in any leisure-time physical activities was *walking* (41.3 %). See Table 1.

Note: ***Physical inactivity*** includes respondents who reported no leisure-time physical activities.
Sedentary lifestyle is defined as respondents reporting exercising less than 20 minutes/sesion, and/or less than 3 times/ week of activity during the past month.

Overweight and Weight Control Practices

Deborah A. Spicer, RD, MPH
(Division of Nutrition)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

- 24.7 percent of New Yorkers reported they were overweight. Males had a higher self-reported prevalence of overweight (26.2%) than females (23.3%). See Figures 20, 21 and 22.

- A higher proportion of black adults were overweight (33%) than were Hispanics (28%) or whites (24%).

Figure 20

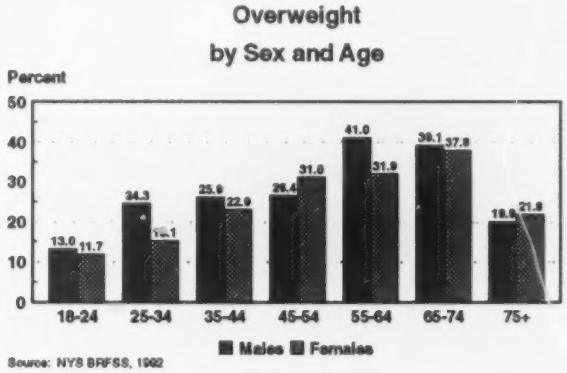


Figure 21

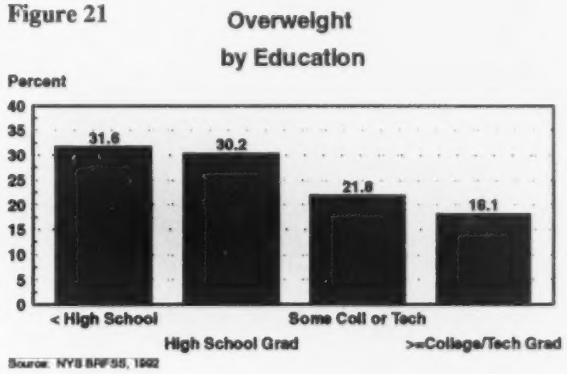
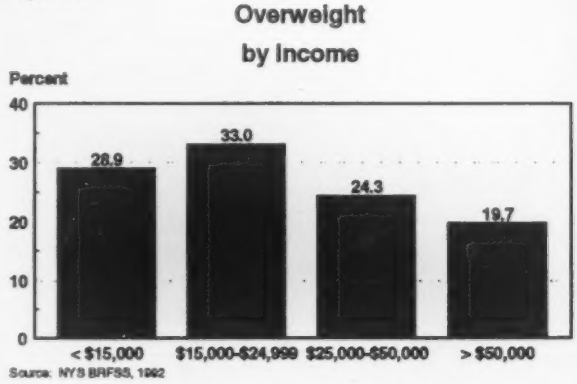


Figure 22



- 37 percent of adults reported they were trying to lose weight (while only 24.7 percent were overweight).

- Of those who were trying to lose weight, 77 percent were eating fewer calories, while only 51 percent were increasing physical activity.

- Males and females were equally likely to be increasing physical activity (49.4% vs 52.8%). People over 55 were much less likely to be increasing physical activity. Blacks (38.2%) were much less likely than whites (54.2%) or Hispanics (44.6%) to be increasing physical activity in an effort to lose weight.

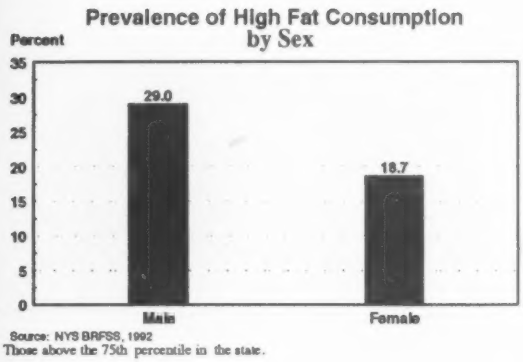
Note: Based on self reported weight and height. **Overweight** is defined as females with a body mass index >=27.3 and males with a body mass index >=27.8.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Dietary Fat Intake

Thomas A. Melnik, DrPH
(Division of Nutrition)

Figure 23



- Responses to an abbreviated food frequency questionnaire (13 foods and food groups) were used to develop an index of fat intake. Respondents were categorized into quartiles of fat intake based on the distribution of fat consumption for all respondents in the state. High fat consumption was defined as those above the 75th percentile for distribution of fat intake in the state.

- The findings indicate that the prevalence of high fat consumption decreases with age, is greater in males than females, and is less among white non-Hispanics compared to all other groups combined. See Figures 23, 24 and 25.

Figure 24

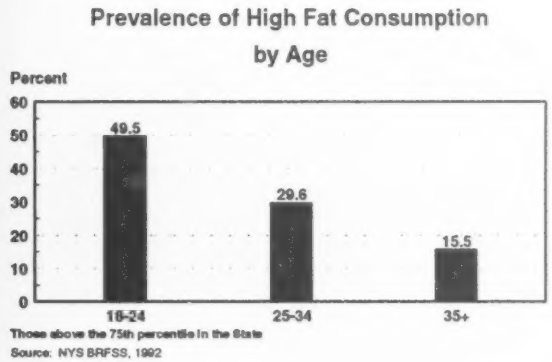
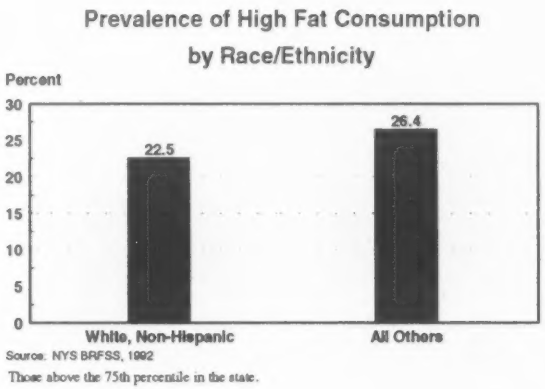


Figure 25

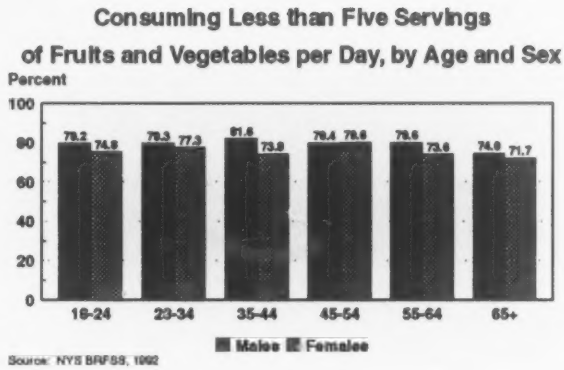


Fruits and Vegetables

Deborah A. Spicer, RD, MPH
(Division of Nutrition)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Figure 26



- Only 23.2 percent of New Yorkers reported they eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day This means that 76.8 percent of the population is not meeting dietary recommendations set forth by the National Cancer Institute. More males failed to meet the recommendation than females (79.1% vs 74.8%). See Figure 26.

- Only 28.8 percent reported they ate less than 3 servings per day, while 44.6 percent ate 3-4 servings per day. For this group, reaching the goal of at least five servings a day will require only modest changes.

- A higher percentage of blacks did not meet the recommendations (81.2%) than whites (76.8%) or Hispanics (75.1%).

- Those with less education were more likely to not meet the recommendations, but low consumption does not appear to be restricted to those with lower income. See Figures 27 and 28.

Figure 27

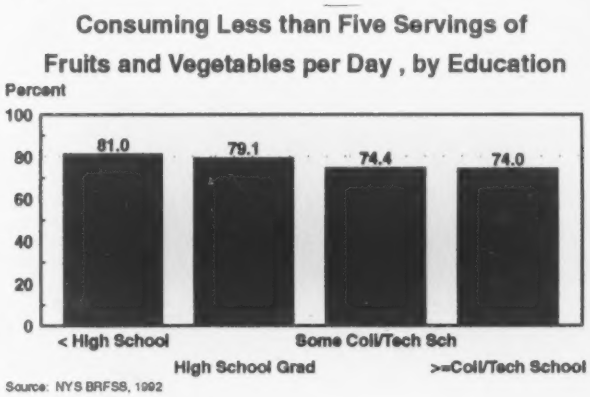
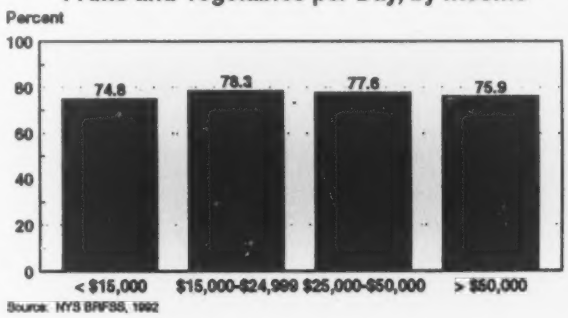


Figure 28

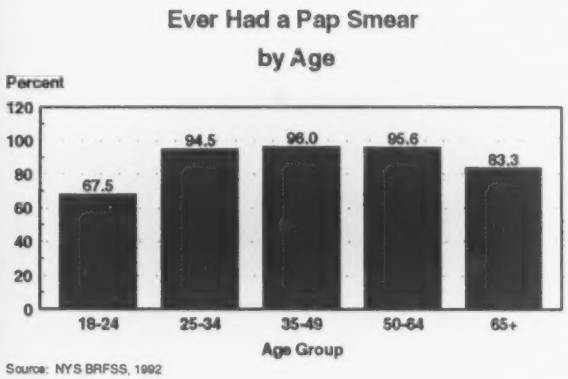


Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Pap Smear Screening

Aura Weinstein, MPH
(Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology)
Patricia Lillquist, MSW
(Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology)

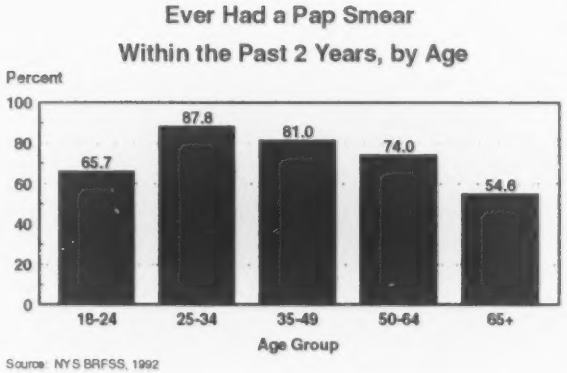
Figure 29



- Of all women with intact uteri, 89 percent have reported they had a Pap smear.
- The proportion of women having had a Pap smear was lower among the youngest (18-24) and oldest (65+) age groups, among those who had never been married, and among those with incomes less than $15,000. See Figure 29.

- Only 75 percent of women with intact uteri have had a Pap smear within the past two years.
- Pap smear testing within the past two years was lowest among the 18-24 and 65+ age groups, among women who were widowed, among women with incomes less than $15,000, and among women with less than a high school education. See Figure 30.

Figure 30



Mammography Use

Susan True
(Cancer Services Program)
Patricia Lillquist, MSW
(Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

- 76 percent of women age 40 and over reported having ever had a mammogram.
- Only 71 percent of women age 40 and older reported having ever had a mammogram AND a breast exam.
- 89 percent of women having mammograms reported they were done as part of a routine checkup. See Figure 31.

Figure 31

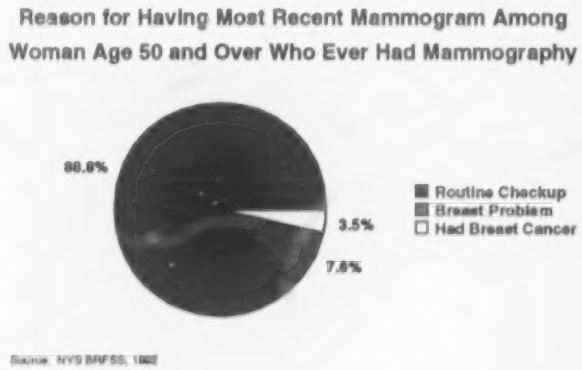
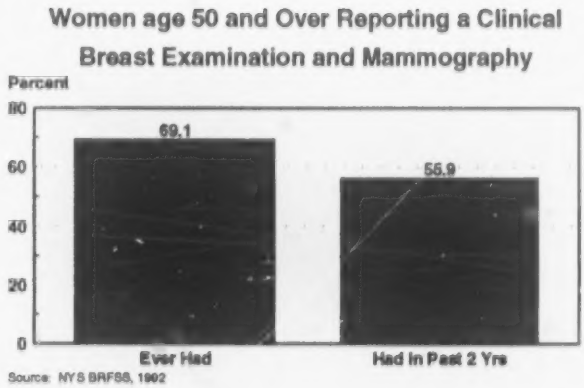


Figure 32



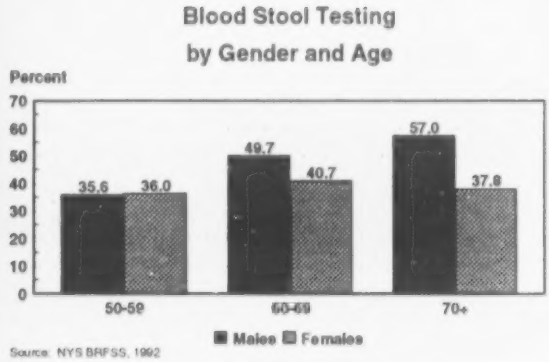
- While 69.1 percent of women age 50 and older had ever received a mammogram and clinical breast exam, only 55.9 percent had received them within the past two years. See Figure 32.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Colorectal Cancer Screening

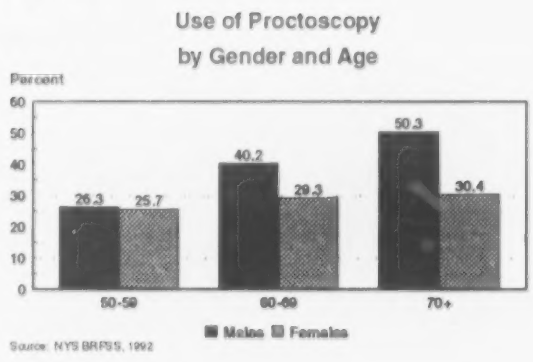
Patricia Lillquist, MSW
(Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology)

Figure 33



- Approximately 33 percent of New Yorkers age 40 and older have had a digital rectal exam.
- Approximately 42 percent of those age 50 and older have had a blood stool test.
- Blood stool testing increased with age for men but not for women, although the differences were not statistically significant. See Figure 33.
- Those age 50 and older with incomes of $35,000 and higher were more likely to have had blood stool testing, (57.7 %) than those with incomes under $35,000 (37.7%).

Figure 34

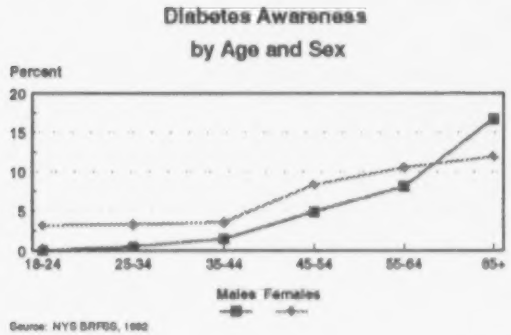


- Approximately 33 percent of New York State residents age 50 and older have had proctoscopy.
- Use of proctoscopy increased with age for men but not for women, although the differences were not statistically significant. See Figure 34.

Diabetes

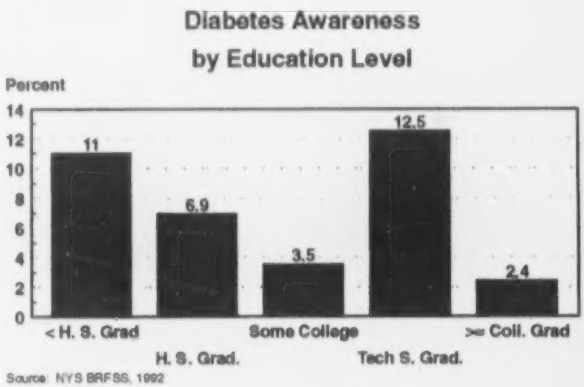
Kathryn Godley, MSN
(Bureau of Adult and Gerontological Health)

Figure 35



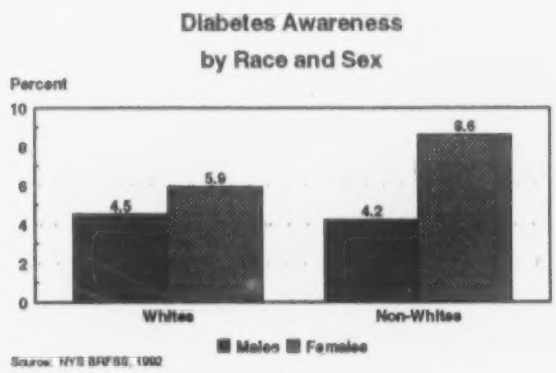
- 5.6 percent of respondents have ever been told by a doctor they have diabetes.
- Females age 65+ were more likely to report they were told by a doctor they have diabetes (6.7% vs 4.4%). See Figure 35.

Figure 36



- Those with less than a high school education (11.0%) were more likely to have been told they have diabetes than those who continued their education. See Figure 36.

Figure 37



- Non-white male respondents were less likely than white male respondents to have been told by a doctor they have diabetes, while non-white female respondents were more likely than white female respondents to have been told. See Figure 37.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

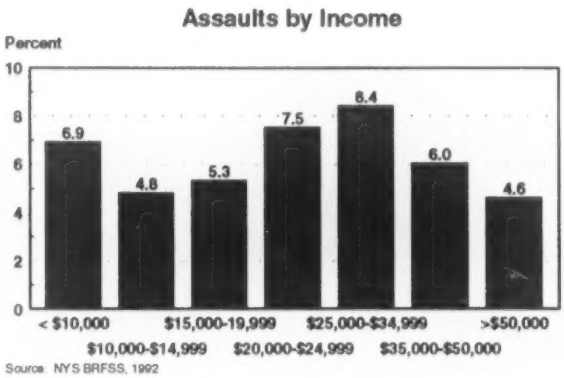
Violence

Gloria Hale-Carlsson, MPH
(Injury Control Program)

- 4.7 percent of New Yorkers reported they or a member of their family have been a victim of violent or abusive behavior, like assault, during the last 12 months.

- Households with the highest percentages of reported assaults were those with income levels between $20,000 - $34,999 a year. See Figure 38.

Figure 38



Source: NYS BRFSS, 1992